

Decision of the Standing Commission of AQAS

on the bachelor degree programmes:

Interior Architecture

(Bachelor of Interior Architecture) (English and Turkish)

offered by the **Eastern Mediterranean University (North Cyprus)**

Based on the report of the expert panel and the discussions of the Standing Commission in its 4th meeting on 19th February 2020, the Standing Commission decides:

1. The study programmes “**Interior Architecture**” (**Bachelor of Interior Architecture**) in **English** and **Turkish** language offered by the **Eastern Mediterranean University (Northern Cyprus)** are accredited according to the AQAS criteria for programme accreditation.

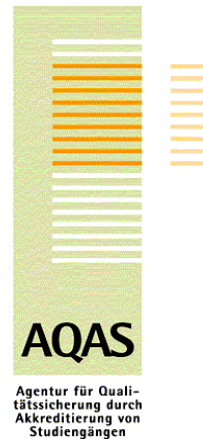
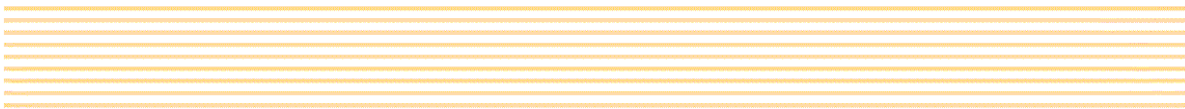
The study programmes comply with the requirements defined by the AQAS criteria for programme accreditation and thus the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in their current version.

2. The accreditation is given for the period of **six years** and is valid until **30th September 2026**.

The following **recommendations** are given for further improvement of the programmes:

1. The department should focus on the effective implementation of more structured elements of quality assurance in which the link between checking and acting becomes clear to the relevant stakeholders.
2. Student representation in relevant bodies should be broadened and reflect the diversity of the student body, particularly international students.
3. Interdisciplinary elements and teamwork experiences should be extended in the curricula.
4. Courses such as “Design Theory”, “History”, and “Sociology” should be placed in the earlier semesters.
5. The studio culture should be further strengthened.
6. Stronger design thinking in material reality should be encouraged instead of conceptual thinking in digital lines.
7. A stronger and more explicit integration of individual subjects such as construction, building science, light and acoustics directly into project-work as an integrated design studio should be considered.
8. The department should incorporate a longer internship period without decreasing feasibility of studies.
9. In future staff recruitment of the department, there should be a focus to balance the ratio of interior architects compared to the number of architects in the teaching staff by increasing the number of interior architects.
10. Plotting facilities for students should be available at an economically feasible fee.

With regard to the reasons for this decision the Standing Commission refers to the attached assessment report.



Experts' Report

on the bachelor degree programmes:

Interior Architecture

(Bachelor of Interior Architecture) (English and Turkish)

offered by the **Eastern Mediterranean University (North Cyprus)**

Visit to the university: 31st October / 1st November 2019

Panel of Experts:

Prof. Dr. Ralf Weber	Technical University of Dresden, Faculty for Architecture, Germany
Prof. Dr. Özge Cordan	Istanbul Technical University, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Interior Architecture Istanbul (Turkey)
Pia A. Doell	Interior Architect, Vice President of the German Association of Interior Architects, Frankfurt (Germany) (representative from the labour market)
Marcel Modes	Student of University of Aachen (Germany), (student representative)
Coordinator: Ronny Heintze	AQAS e. V., Cologne, Germany

1. Introduction

The Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) is located in Famagusta, Northern Cyprus. The University traces its history back to the Higher Technological Institute established in 1979. In 1986, following the TRNC Assembly's approval of the Statute establishing the North Cyprus Education Foundation and Eastern Mediterranean University (18/86), the Institute of Higher Technology was converted into a state university, which is administrated by the Board of Trustees, taking the name of Eastern Mediterranean University. It started with three faculties (Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Economics and Business, and Faculty of Arts and Sciences). An increasing number of students in the relevant programmes led to the creation of new faculties such as Faculty of Law (1996), Faculty of Communications (1997), and with the establishment of the Department of Interior Architecture (EMU-DIA), the Faculty of Architecture was established in 1997.

Today EMU consists of eleven faculties and five schools that offer 87 programmes in a wide range of undergraduate programmes leading to a bachelor's degree. Most departments also offer programmes of advanced study leading to Master's (73 programmes) and Ph.D. (21 programmes) degrees since 1990s. EMU-DIA offers four programmes: two undergraduate (in English and Turkish language) and two postgraduate programmes.

The Faculty of Architecture has a tri-departmental structure with the departments of Architecture, Interior Architecture (in Turkish and in English) and Industrial Design (while the Department of Industrial Design is no more accepting students). The first year is a "Foundation year" which includes common courses taken by all students in the two departments in the Faculty of Architecture. The first year also includes some common courses within the whole university.

EMU-DIA explains that it displays a rich international student profile at both of the programmes. The English programme of the Department has students from 25 countries, such as Kazakhstan, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Libya, Somalia, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Palestine and Bangladesh. The Turkish programme of the department, besides students from Turkey and TRNC, has also a number of students from other countries in which Turkic languages are spoken, such as Kazakhstan

Students at EMU pay tuition fees following a predefined scheme depending on their country of origin.

2. Policy and Procedures for Quality Assurance

The programme is subject to the Higher Education Institution's policy and associated procedures for quality assurance, including procedures for the design, approval, monitoring, and revision of the programmes.

A quality-oriented culture, focusing on continuous quality enhancement, is in place. This includes regular feedback mechanisms involving both internal and external stakeholders.

The strategy, policies, and procedures have a formal status and are made available in published form to all those concerned. They also include roles for students and other stakeholders.

As outlined by the university, the most important strategic goal of EMU is the institutionalization of the university's academic and scientific quality culture, which is emphasized in EMU's strategic planning 2017–2022. In order to this, undergraduate and postgraduate students have an opportunity to evaluate courses and instructors online so that the academic staff can take their feedback into account for reassessment and further improvement of the education on offer. Additionally, each department/programme in the university is encouraged by the university administration to work to-

wards external international accreditation so that departments/programmes will conduct a comprehensive self-assessment and see their strengths as well as the weaknesses to be minimized.

Within the department there are four control mechanisms: Curriculum review; academic standards review; course evaluation; and external review. The major improvement concerning the curriculum review and revision has been carried out by the Departmental Board. Review and revisions were initiated immediately after the English version of the programme was accredited by AQAS, mainly by reflecting on the reported issues besides recommendations given by the expert panel and also by following the matters highlighted in the new Strategic Plan (2016–2019) of the programme.

With regard to the academic standards review, an additional tool is now implemented and used as the main tool to carry out the self-evaluation of the courses in the revised curriculum: IMOBBIG – Evaluation tool that was developed based on the Communication Group of Chairs of Interior Design Schools' meeting at 2010. The results of this new tool are summarized as Learning Outcomes Matrix (LOM). Besides the identification of particular needs for improvement, the consistency of courses in the same area could be strengthened. The LOM is also described to have helped EMU DIA in grasping the relationships between courses in a specific sequence.

Furthermore, the Chair of EMU-DIA participates in IMOBBIG meetings that are held twice a year at different institutions and then delivers feedback to the department accreditation committee about recent discourses upon accreditations, quality issues and ongoing practices.

Experts' Evaluation

The review panel carefully considered the presented quality assurance mechanisms, practices, and tools and also discussed the issue with the different relevant groups to understand their involvement, motivation, and the impact of implemented measures. As a result of the interviews with the faculty and students, the experts conclude that the instruments for quality assurance are set up and established and very well-intended, yet not fully implemented in actual practice to the level that an impact could be clearly associated with them. Course evaluations on the EMU internet portal are available and implemented while not being mandatory, thus the number of students who actually fill out the forms are currently not sufficient to make solid conclusions about the quality level of individual courses and their respective instructors.

At the same time the panel of experts could see a clear commitment and interest in staff towards continuous improvement as numerous informal feedback loops are in place and could also be explained as part of the interviews. What became obvious to the reviewers is the currently limited interest of students in the participation in structured evaluations. The response rate of online course evaluations does not reach a level that satisfies the Faculty. The panel believes that a potential reason for this lack of participation/interest of students might be seen in the way the results are published, reported back and discussed, particularly with the students. As a result, informal mechanisms are more relevant and the open atmosphere in the Faculty as well as the implemented open-door policy offer opportunities for feedback. This, however, leads only to snapshots rather than to a comprehensive picture.

The reviewers therefore suggest that measures should be taken to increase student participation in the formalized course evaluations. Options are manifold from improved communication and publication of results to mandatory participation as a requirement for completing a course. At the same time and because of different teaching methods in lectures, seminars or design projects, individual questionnaires ought to be custom-tailored to these different types of courses. At the same time, it should be recognized that the experts can confirm that issues raised in evaluations are discussed by the Faculty board, supporting the above-mentioned conclusion that all implemented steps are not only well intended but also based on the interest towards continuous improvement.

Continuing this line of thought, more structured feedback loops within the faculty including the student community should be established. This could include regular evaluations of individual courses and the curricular structure by the teachers in the Faculty themselves. Regularly scheduled teaching conferences of the curriculum committee and of the Faculty as a whole could be scheduled for this purpose. Of equal importance are regular evaluations of the curriculum and its courses by department alumni. After several years of working in actual practice, the perspective of the reviewers might have changed and valuable insights gained for better tailoring the curriculum to the needs of the profession.

A successful quality assurance system also includes periodic regular self-evaluations as well as external reviews. The department uses the tool of accreditation to implement this important step of independent quality assurance. In this context, the faculty already put together a Strategic Plan 2016–2019 which lists strengths and weaknesses of the present curricular structure and identifies areas that need further development. However, a schedule for when the individual goals should be achieved is currently missing and prevents operational implementation and clear accountability of the individual stakeholders at the departmental and the university level.

The reviewers noticed that students are not sufficiently represented in committees or governing boards of the Department and the Faculty, especially not in the Curriculum Committee or the Faculty Council. The reviewers point out that it is important to develop a culture of cooperation in which all stakeholders are involved in the processes of assessing, developing and improving the quality of study programmes. While this spirit is well alive at the interpersonal level and in many informal structures, the structural representation of this approach is not yet well implemented. This holds especially for foreign students in the English language programme in Interior Architecture. Here, the interviewed students mentioned that they do not feel represented in any of the decision-making processes within the department. Particularly in light of the different challenges of international students and in reflection of the student structure in the English taught programme, this issue should be addressed at the level of the department or programme. The panel believes that this issue also has to be seen in light of the broader university context, where the last years clearly have shown a strategically intended increase in international student numbers. As a result, internal structures of representation and participation will have to find ways to deal with this increased diversity of the student body. A more structured and formalized approach towards evaluations would also enable a stronger focus on student workload, of the progression and completion rates, evaluations of the learning environment and support services. The current snapshot approach does prevent the identification of more structural areas for improvement as it naturally focusses on peaks and other anomalies.

Another interesting observation that should be shared with regard to more strategic considerations is the fact that to date the bachelor programmes in Interior Architecture were evaluated twice by external accreditation agencies. So far, these procedures excluded the Master- and the PhD programmes and consequently only supply an incomplete snapshot of the departmental achievements and potentials. For further accreditations, the inclusion of these missing programmes components ought to be considered by the university.

A pending issue that was also identified is the demonstration how recommendations of previous accreditations were considered. This has relevance to EMU DIAs own Faculty members, to the students and to the university administration. While the review panel could see that issues have been discussed, it remained quite unclear if and which decisions were taken. Consequently, it seems wise to establish a timetable for the decision on the implementation of these — however not mandatory — recommendations.

To conclude the numerous thoughts on quality assurance at EMU DIA, it can be said that indeed feedback is considered, and stakeholders are involved. However, while all adhering university wide

policies and bodies exist, at this time many elements of improvement result from less formalized activities which seems to meet the current requirements of the department. However, it clearly leaves blind spots as it does not deliver a complete picture. Consequently, the review panel encourages focusing on the effective implementation of more structured elements of quality assurance in which the link between checking and acting becomes clear to the relevant stakeholders. This includes to make sure of a broad student involvement in which the representation of students reflects the diversity of the student body, particularly of international students.

Conclusion

Based on the above assessment, the criterion on quality assurance is substantially fulfilled.

Findings

1. The department should focus on the effective implementation of more structured elements of quality assurance in which the link between checking and acting becomes clear to the relevant stakeholders.
2. Student representation in relevant bodies should be broadened and reflect the diversity of the student body, particularly by including international students.

3. Quality of the Curriculum

The intended learning outcomes of the programme are defined and available in published form. They reflect both academic and labour-market requirements and are up-to-date with relation to the relevant field. The design of the programme supports achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

The academic level of graduates corresponds to the requirements of the appropriate level of the European Qualifications Framework.

The curriculum's design is readily available and transparently formulated.

Study programmes' aims

The SER describes that Interior Architecture is a multilateral specialized profession that addresses the interior space design of the built environment. In a changing and developing world of design, specialization is explained to be an inevitable fact. In this respect, the responsibilities of interior architects are described as covering a wide range of duties including spatial analysis in regard of the requirements, design decisions, project preparation, material selection and detailing, modelling, presentation, production, and application issues. EMU-DIA explains that an interior architect is supposed to suggest useful arrangements for a better living, by dealing with colour, texture, natural and artificial light, sound, heating, ventilation, air-conditioning, furniture, etc. The aim of the Department of Interior Architecture is to train the young candidates to be fully prepared and equipped with knowledge to contribute to the creation of a better environment for human beings. The department aims to offer an education that covers the design process as a whole, from analysis to application. It focusses primarily on creativity which is explained to play a vital role in designing a caring, friendly and welcoming atmosphere supported by artistic-academic-social activities. These objectives are expected to enable students to have an outlook on life that will enable them to approach issues from different perspectives.

EMU-DIA outlines learning outcomes in two different areas: generic learning outcomes such as communication and collaboration, self-directed learning, computer and mathematics skills, and critical thinking. The university also lists specific learning outcomes in the fields of design and theory, and other specific skills. EMU-DIA also explains that in the past five years the curriculum

was further developed along the lines of the last panel's recommendation, e.g. by increasing the integration of 'Local Culture' into EMU-DIA education.

Curricular structure

The curricular structure of the EMU-DIA is gathered around the 'Interior Architecture Studio' where there is a chain of design studios in each of the eight semesters. The other courses are designed to support and feed the interior design studios. In both versions (Turkish and English) of the curriculum the programme equals 240 Credits in ECTS lasting eight semesters.

Every semester features a design studio that equals 10 Credits in the first four semesters, then grows to 12 Credits until it equals 18 Credits in the last semester. These studios are supported by courses like "Approaches to Influence and Persuasion", "Concept of Structures", "Color & Lighting for Interiors", or "Integrated Building Systems and Sustainability". Three university electives and three area elective courses are placed in the second half of the programmes.

Experts' Evaluation

Considering the curricula of both programmes, first of all it can be confirmed that both programmes are designed towards the same ideas and intended learning outcomes. While maintaining their independent character through different classes the qualification goals are the same while the curricula show smaller differences due to language requirements. The intended learning outcomes are categorized as design, theory, other skills electives and general education. Each course, both compulsory and elective ones and both subject-specific and interdisciplinary in the revised curricula of the study programme, were evaluated according to IMMOBIG, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the department's strategic plan as well. With that clear design towards international requirements the programmatic link to local characteristics continues to be an area requiring continuous attention. The panel positively recognizes that in teaching reality the local rooting is well implemented, and the unique context of EMU inspires teaching practice. However, the course descriptions and key programme documents do not yet reflect that unique capital available to EMU-DIA. This issue, already discussed five years ago in the last accreditation, should find its way into a transparent documentation for the outside world and interested students and well as other external stakeholders.

Because of its multi-structure approach in designing and updating the curricula, the number of electives was reduced in the current version of the curricula. In other words, the revised curricula have three electives less than the previous ones. Consequently, the reduction of elective courses also reduced the objectives of 'flexibility' and 'specialization'. However, the panel believes that the need to compromise was well balanced by the department and can support the chosen solutions.

In light of the presented evidences and the review of student work it can be confirmed that the programmes teach on the level of Bachelor programmes (level 6) as defined by the European Qualifications Framework, and the academic degree awarded to the graduates corresponds well with the achieved learning outcomes.

All courses are documented and support the achievement of the outcomes on programme level. The curriculum defines which elements are compulsory and which are electives. The first year, jointly taught with the architecture programme consequently has to make some compromises as teaching needs to cater different requirements as also the accreditation standards of the National Architectural Accreditation Board (NAAB) have to be reflected while EMU-DIA – in its context – clearly has a stronger focus towards Bologna principles which the department can be complimented for.

Some thoughts might help EMU-DIA to further increase the quality of the programmes and thus further support graduate success:

Interdisciplinarity and teamwork should remain an area for further development (**Finding 3**). Although there is an interior architectural studio course in each semester, the students should be encouraged to work as a team and the teaching staff should form the studio through warm-up studies. Even though the foundation year gives an opportunity to work in an interdisciplinary team at this stage EMU-DIA students have not yet developed a differentiated understanding of their own contribution based on skills and competencies from interior architecture. One of the interior architecture studios in the advanced semesters could be formalized as a 'co-op studio' to improve interdisciplinary aspects besides improving the team spirit and task sharing as a simulation of the professional life.

In the same line of further optimizing the curricular structure, some of the courses such as "Design Theory", "History", and "Sociology" could be placed in the earlier years to support the intellectual capacity of the students besides improving their design knowledge, skills and competencies (**Finding 4**). Later studios will benefit from more profound concepts and realizations.

At this time the impact and importance of the core courses such as "Colour and Light" or "Material and Acoustics" in the interior architecture curricula should be extended not only with the theory courses but the outcomes of these courses should also impact the design studios, assignments, site visits and lab opportunities. It is important to further strengthen the studio culture to reflect that they are focal points supporting the development of the students (**Finding 5**). The experts believe that it is well possible that these elements are currently implicitly included as a side aim, however, at the moment they are not clearly defined in the course outcomes and neither explicitly addressed as expectations, so these important elements are not reflected appropriately in the later course outcomes.

All courses are assigned a defined number of credit points in the ECTS and the total programme workload was allocated to the different courses in the updated curricula. The programmes use a course and not a modularized structure as regulations of YÖK and YODAK foresee it this way. However, this does not cause a contradiction as the ECTS is used as an additional feature and does not replace the local system. It should be positively recognized that EMU-DIA, as a result of the last accreditation, assigned a number of credit points to the internship. On the other hand, the minimum requirement for the number of internship days was reduced to 20 from 30. While this positively impacts the feasibility of studies, it contradicts the intended learning outcomes of this phase. The expert group strongly recommends increasing the number of internship days as in the field of interior architecture challenges of the real life, customer contact, coordination with different providers etc. shape future classroom perceptions and individual student development. Additionally, students should be encouraged by the academic staff to assign higher importance and value towards the internship especially as a preparation for professional life. During the site visit, the graduates and labour market representatives clearly and anonymously expressed that the internship should be extended. Some even recommended that the internship should be a semester long.

Conclusion:

Based on the above assessment, the criterion on quality of the curriculum is substantially fulfilled.

Findings

3. Interdisciplinary elements and teamwork experiences should be extended.
4. Courses such as "Design Theory", "History", and "Sociology" should be placed in the earlier semesters.
5. The studio culture should be further strengthened.

4. Learning, Teaching and Assessment of Students

The delivery of material encourages students to take an active role in the learning process. Students are assessed using accessible criteria, regulations, and procedures, which are made readily available to all participants and which are applied consistently. Assessment procedures are designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

Learning, Teaching

As stated in the Self Evaluation Report, EMU counts on a balance between theoretical and practical aspects throughout the B.A. programmes. The first year of teaching happens jointly with the Architecture programme and throughout both programmes a key didactic element are the interior architecture studios.

Assessment

Both of the study programmes are based on the central assessment system of EMU: dates and times are set by the exam coordinators in the Rector's office and announced in the academic calendar. This central control is explained to be important as there is a certain number of university core and elective courses taken by all students in all departments of the university. Because of the specific character of assessments in the Faculty of Architecture (due to juries), the Rector's office sets the date of the juries and exams of this Faculty together with the administration of its departments.

The juries to assess the studio work are done in the jury week time (which is a week in the exam period). The department prepares a jury week programme and assigns guest jury members for each studio course. Guest jury members are generally the instructors of the other studio courses, or sometime from outside the university. Students are explained to have no other exam or course in this week so that they can get prepared for the jury and also have the opportunity to participate in other classes' juries. This organization is done twice a semester: once for the mid-term and once for the final exams/juries.

The graduation jury, on the other hand, is described to be organized different from the other juries. Generally, the jury dates are set at the very end of the jury week/exam week. The English and the Turkish track students of EMU-DIA have a connected jury for graduation. This is organized a series of activities and takes place on two days. On the first day, the juries are realized. The jury members are the Chairs of the department (chair of the jury as well), Vice-Chair of the department, course instructors, and guest jury members who are professionally recognized in North Cyprus and Turkey. On the second day, graduation projects are exhibited.

Experts' Evaluation

When considering teaching methods, the reviewers note that a clear strength of the department can be identified in its very motivated Faculty and staff. The implemented methods of teaching and learning consider the diversity of students and their needs and – as far as it can be subject to this assessment — seem to foster a better understanding between people from different nations and cultural and political backgrounds. This is especially commendable in light of the complex political circumstances on the island of Cyprus. Members of the Faculty also expressed a clear concern for the individual well-being of the students and the implementation of teaching allows a teacher-student-interaction that is centered along the needs of individual students. In this regard the experts can confirm that the programmes have a 'student centred education' and in terms of learning and teaching implements interactive approaches, face-to-face communication, and career integrated teaching and learning with a flipped classroom implemented in some courses as described in the SER.

Teaching and learning methods are generally appropriate to achieve the intended learning outcomes of the programmes. However, the reviewers noted a strong preponderance of digital media over other forms of delineations and representations, especially in the early stages of the design process. From the reviewer's point of view, the purpose of using media in the design process is not just for the visualization of a design project but it is an essential means to develop initial ideas and communicate them within the group of a design team. Especially the sketch and the rough model allow a process of quickly developing new design ideas and quickly modifying concepts. By contrast, computer renderings are rather time consuming and ill-equipped to develop multiple ideas in the early phases of a project. In short, design thinking in material reality instead of conceptual thinking in digital lines should be encouraged (**Finding 6**).

The experts very much support the approach of the department of understanding the interior design studio as a key element enabling learner progression in developing a professional identity of an interior architect. Teaching and learning in architecture and interior architecture is to a large part dependent on a culture of working together in studio environment, which to some extent simulates the working culture and atmosphere of a design office. In order to further develop this teaching approach, the reviewers encourage the university's administration to provide more studio space for students and thus allow the Faculty to further strengthen the studio culture which provides an environment in which student can learn from one another.

Further considering the teaching and learning, the reviewers clearly conclude from their interviews with alumni and practitioners, that some room for development is in the consideration of the reality of interior architectural work. A stronger and more explicit integration of individual subjects such as construction, building science, light and acoustics directly into project-work as an integrated design studio should be considered. This would not only strengthen interdisciplinary modes of learning and designing, as required in architectural practice, but it would be a further development of the currently practiced studio approach (**Finding 7**).

Assessment methods for each course are appropriate for the learning outcomes as defined in the course descriptions. Due to the direct and intense face to face interaction assessments also include the necessary feedback that helps the students' learning progression.

There are transparent and published regulations to compensate for disadvantages, illness, absence, or other circumstances that may affect a student.

Finally, but very importantly, the reviewers encourage the faculty to consider incorporating a longer internship period in order to give students enough time to see how a project is developed and implemented (**Finding 8**). Clearly this would have to happen without any unintended extension of the study time. The reduction of total internship days during the latest curriculum update might increase feasibility of studies, however it does not help to increase the understanding of students of real cases, client interaction etc. On the long run, the extension of internship periods will benefit the employability and will decrease the time graduates will need to adjust in new positions. Moreover, partnership programmes that allow more students to spend time abroad, ought to be expanded.

Conclusion:

Based on the above assessment, the criterion on learning, teaching and assessment of students is fulfilled.

Findings:

6. Stronger design thinking in material reality should be encouraged instead of conceptual thinking in digital lines.

7. A stronger and more explicit integration of individual subjects such as construction, building science, light and acoustics directly into project-work as an integrated design studio should be considered.
8. The department should incorporate a longer internship period without decreasing the feasibility of studies .

5. Student Admission, Progression, Recognition and Certification

Consistently applied, pre-defined, published regulations are in place which cover student admission, progression, recognition, and certification.

As stated in the Self Evaluation Report, admission requirements are different for T.R.N.C. citizens, T.R. citizens, and non-citizens:

T.R.N.C. citizens are admitted due to the choices they have made in the University Entrance Exam which are held once a year at EMU on announced dates. Applicants will be granted admission in two categories: a) admission to the English preparatory year programme, or b) admission directly to freshman level. Due to the special character of the programmes there is also the option for admission due to a special ability test exam result and/or portfolio evaluation.

T.R. citizens can be admitted to EMU according to a set quota and other criteria such as results of the Student Selection Exam (ÖSYS) prepared by the Turkish Republic Higher Educational Student Selection and Placement Board (ÖSYM). A second option for this criterion are applicants as "Extra Quote" students. The conditions and application dates are announced by the Turkish Republic Higher Educational Student Selection and Placement Board (ÖSYM).

Applicants from other countries must submit a certified copy of their Higher Secondary School Certificate or Intermediate Certificate or the equivalent, demonstrating that s/he has satisfactorily graduated from secondary school, and must arrange for other relevant certified documents, such as transcripts or detailed mark sheets, to be conveyed to EMU. Applications to the undergraduate programmes are accepted twice a year.

Credits and Recognition

As exemplified in the Self Evaluation Report, the workload is calculated at the beginning of each semester by the academic staff members offering the course with a consideration of the qualities of the course. EMU has its own credit point system which consists of the lecture hours, lab hours and the tutorial hours. Through a calculating key it indicates the student's contact hours and credit for the course.

Experts' Evaluation

The experts positively conclude that admission requirements are very transparent and their application showed no reason for concerns. Clearly the department benefits from central regulations that apply to all universities in the Turkish higher education system and that are centrally implemented by the university's administration. As a consequence of this system, the selection of students is equally fair and transparent as for the whole system. Clearly it can be debated if special talents are required to succeed in the programmes and the admission should also include an assessment of such talents. The experts are well aware about these considerations in the department while they have the same awareness about the regulations coming from the national system which does not foresee such limitations.

Available data on progression supports the conclusion that the programmes can be studied in the foreseen time and that the concept of the programmes works out, meaning the intended learning

outcomes can be achieved in the give timeframe. Despite the growing internationalization of the university, international mobility in terms of exchange/semesters abroad etc. remain an area clearly in need of development. Consequently, regulations for recognition of qualifications gained at other institutions are not heavily practiced while it should be recognized that they are generally in place.

The documentation provided by the university to its graduates meets all requirements and explains the qualification of the candidates to the labour market.

Conclusion:

Based on the above assessment, the criterion on student admission, progression, recognition and certification is fulfilled.

6. Teaching Staff

The composition (quantity, qualifications, professional and international experience, etc.) of the staff is appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

Staff involved with teaching is qualified and competent to do so.

Transparent procedures are in place for the recruitment and development of the staff.

The SER explains that currently the department of Interior Architecture has 14 full-time and 12 part-time instructors in addition to 15 research assistants. The academic profile of the EMU-DIA staff is explained to combine research-based activities with practice of the profession, especially considering the contributions of the part-time staff and invited lecturers. The full-time staff with documented high continuity, on the other hand, has to ensure the academic cohesion of the educational services on offer. Academic staff is entitled to receive support to attend national and international conferences using a predefined university wide conference-funding scheme. Furthermore, the SER describes the design-week held at the department as an important tool to enable and encourage dialogue and exchange with pioneers in the field. At the same time, a series of activities related to lifelong learning organized by the Faculty of Architecture including seminars related to pedagogical and professional issues and technical trips are available to help the teaching staff improve and update their knowledge in various relevant dimensions.

Following the SER, the academic recruitment policy of the university is to have at least a PhD as academic title, and fulfil the minimum academic assessment criteria of the university that are publicly available on EMUs website. The SER highlights that, considering the nature of interior architecture as a discipline, learning from implementation and experts from professional life plays an important role in the development of the students which is also to be reflected in the hiring practice. For this reason, the administration of the university has accepted that in special cases, the Department of Interior Architecture hires a limited number of academic staff with a master's degree.

Experts' Evaluation

The expert panel carefully reviewed the evidence presented in the SER and annexes, including the CVs of the teaching staff involved in both programmes. Besides confirming that the staff involved in teaching is qualified and competent to do so, it can also be concluded that the academic staff is supported by the administration for required research activities as well as teaching activities. The experts learned during the site visit that the academic staff continuously updates their qualifications to perform different types of teaching and learning. In addition to this, the academic staff is also supported in research activities by research leaves, attending national and international conferences funded by the university etc. Experts found that teaching staff has published articles in valuable and indexed journals. In addition, during the site visit the review panel became

aware of research projects both on local and global scale. Although the academic/teaching staff is supported by the university and Faculty administration, the number of research projects could still be raised for the benefit of the research profile of the Faculty and also to further increase the visibility of the department. In this context the panel believes that exchange on the international level should receive a stronger support to enhance dialogue and exchange with pioneers in the field around the world.

Considering staff in the broader sense and without questioning qualitative and quantitative appropriateness of academic staff, it can be suggested that the future staff recruitment of the interior architecture programmes should be seen with the need to balance the ratio of interior architects compared to the number of architects in the teaching staff (**Finding 9**). While this does not neglect the ability to teach in both disciplines, this will have long term impacts on priorities, research foci and interdisciplinarity.

The academic assessment criteria consider the strategic and professional requirements and are publicly available on the EMU's website. In general, the academic recruitment policy of the university is to have a minimum PhD as an academic title. On the other hand, because of interior architecture is a profession that integrates with practice, there are also teaching staff that (only) holds a Master's degree. The expert panel believes that this is well practiced and to the benefit of the quality of the programmes. Applicants for vacant staff positions are evaluated by the administration/committee. The published evaluation criteria and the comparison tables can ensure the transparency of the transparent and fair process of recruitment. **Conclusion:** Based on the above assessment, the criterion on teaching staff is substantially fulfilled.

Findings:

9. In future staff recruitment of the department the focus should be on balancing the ratio of interior architects compared to the number of architects in the teaching staff by increasing the number of interior architects.

7. Learning Resources and Student Support

Appropriate facilities and resources are available for learning and teaching activities.
Guidance and support is available for students to advise on achieving successful completion of their studies.

Facilities and resources

Following the information provided, EMU's campus university extends on a land of 2,200,00m² with several buildings for education, sports' and cultural activities, dormitories, meal and shopping facilities.

The programmes make use of educational buildings that provide an atrium, 18 studios, two classrooms, four auto CAD labs, a clay workshop, and a library. In addition, some studios in the Faculty building are 24 hours available for the students who wish to work in the Faculty overnight. Also, all students can use lockers provided in the studio building to keep their materials safe and secure.

EMU outlines that the financial resources rely on student fees to a large extent. The tuition fees are calculated on the basis of programme types and the nationality of students.

Student support

The SER explains that for any student entering the department, an academic advisor is appointed. The academic advisor is responsible for helping the student to register in the programme, take

courses, etc. The student can refer to his/her advisor in any matter related to his/her programme during his/her study. Students can change their courses during the “add and drop” period which is about two weeks after the courses commence. Students have the right to withdraw from a course until the end of the “withdrawal period” which is about 11 weeks after the beginning of the semester. These days are announced in the academic calendar of the university. Students with any special situation are allowed to register as “part-time” students, take a lower number of courses and extend their duration of study.

The assessment results of all courses and the attendance ratio of students are announced in the student portal. Students are allowed to see their exam papers after the results are announced.

Experts' Evaluation

The panel of experts can positively confirm that all course descriptions are available to students on the department's homepage and that these documents contain the intended learning outcomes, methods of learning and teaching, assessment methods, and the expected workload. This transparency is important to students as it allows them planning and transparency about the required workload. While the information for individual courses is presented in a way which is clear and easy to understand the experts learned also from interviews with students that particularly without personal explanation it can be challenging to understand the programmes' structure though. A graphic representation of the programmes' structure would be helpful to better understand the “study paths” and which courses are related or lead to each other. Recognizing that this is not a problem of structure but more a challenge of transparent explanation of complexity, a graphic representation could easily solve this issue and support students and externals to understand the structure of the programmes without further support.

The expert panel very carefully analysed the number of students not able to finish within the expected period of time and found out that there is a quite high fluctuation from term to term. While this issue will be further addressed in chapter eight, it is important to highlight at this point that after carefully reviewing and interviewing students no reason was found that would indicate that the drop out and fluctuation would be due to bad coordination or a lack of student support. [Learning Resources](#)

Based on the documented numbers and also as seen during the site visit, the amount of computer labs is sufficient from the experts' point of view and there was no indication that software availability and appropriate variety was at doubt. As explained earlier the existing (explicit or implicit) focus on digital tools causes hands on skills and craftsmanship to be an area requiring future attention as explained earlier in this report. This goes in line with the current need for workshops for model building, furniture building or lighting experiments. The expert panel positively recognizes the presented plans to create new workshops in a newly planned Faculty building. This is work in progress and the experts encourage the department to discuss improvements in the curricula also with regard to special and technological consequences. Certain ideas like a lighting lab and 3D printers have been mentioned and should be followed according to current technological developments (for example robotics).

The expert group sees great value in the existing campus atmosphere which was open and intercultural. At the same time the panel supports the department's own perception regarding the sufficient number of classrooms for the current number of students. If the suggested improvements in the fields of hands-on technology like model building/prototyping are carried out, the demand for rooms will probably increase supporting the need for a long and mid-range plan to keep up and improve facilities. Reflecting prior thoughts that increased teamwork and more interdisciplinary elements would contribute positively to the quality of the programmes, of course this enhanced didactic model would also require more studio space. A studio space should provide a

permanent workplace assigned to one student so that he or she can work with peers in the same room and leave materials in the classroom. This facilitates teamwork and creative approaches which is difficult to organize without proper space. Currently students have to clear the space after each class in order to allow the same space to be used by another student. The experts underline that also current practice enables the achievement of the learning outcomes and understand these future oriented thoughts as an encouragement for the department in their initiatives towards continuous improvement.

One issue that was raised by students and confirmed by teaching staff is a lack of plotting facilities at the Faculty. Students have to use copy shops on campus that are profit entities. Consequently, they avoid printing as much as possible which impacts the quality of teaching and learning because consultations are being held on students' laptops and screens instead of using pen and paper. This impacts the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. On the one hand, this issue was not new to the department and should be easy to solve (**Finding 10**), on the other hand the fact that this is a known point that was undisputed by students and teachers did not show up in internal quality assurance supports the recommendation towards a more structured approach toward quality assurance from chapter three of this report.

The library provides an appropriate amount of literature, journals, and academic sources to enable the achievement of the learning outcomes. Publications not presented at the library are ordered on demand. Student Support Services

Potential students find all relevant information on the department's website. Once arriving on campus, new students can attend so called "orientation days" in which they receive all relevant information about the programmes and formalities like registrations. Based on the interviews with students and alumni, students who were able to attend those guided days usually have a good level of orientation and succeed without major beginners' difficulties. The experts' panel also learned that for many individual reasons students might arrive late and miss the orientation offers. Initial orientation naturally is more challenging for these students.

As an institutionalized student advisory service each student is assigned an academic advisor from the teaching staff who is supposed to help with struggles in orientation when it comes to registrations and other administrative issues. Later on, the academic advisor's role develops into a mentor's role to provide professional guidance. This fits well the approach of the department of paying lots of attention to one on one contact and personal interaction with students. The teaching staff is very available to students due to an open-door policy. Individual advise for specific programmes/programme content is well available to students.

International students make up a large proportion of the student body. As many of them speak Turkish, they do not face any more difficulties than students from TRNC. When it comes to the group of non-Turkish speaking international students they lack a certain degree of representation or specific offerings without being able to name specifically what those offerings should look like on an institutional level. The experts' panel has the impression that all stakeholders are aware of the special role of international students and want to make sure that everybody receives the support they need.

One aspect that caught the attention of the review panel is the fact that diversity is encouraged at EMU. There are many clubs and student-driven activities on campus. They all seem to receive a fair amount of support from the university. Students come from approx. 110 countries and create a culturally diverse student body and campus. This diversity should also find its way into being better reflected in the student governing body, as almost all of the elected student representatives only speak Turkish (from either TRNC or Turkey) which makes it difficult for them to properly rep-

resent the specific needs of international students in official university committees (**Finding 2**) (also see chapter 2).

Conclusion:

Based on the above assessment, the criterion on learning resources and student support is substantially fulfilled.

Findings:

10. Plotting facilities for students should be available at an economically feasible fee.

8. Information

Data is collected from relevant sources and stakeholders, analysed, and used for the effective management and continuous enhancement of the programme.
Impartial and objective, up-to-date information regarding the programme and its qualifications is published regularly. This published information is appropriate for and available to relevant stakeholders.

As an important source of information for students the EMU refers to the webpage of the Department. Students can find information about the department as well as the curricula and the course descriptions on this webpage. The SER further explains that at the beginning of each semester in each course an inclusive course outline is delivered to the students in which all necessary information related to the course and the weekly programme is included. At the beginning of their studies, every student receives access to the student portal of the university. Through this portal students are able to see information on their programmes, exam lists, etc.

Experts' Evaluation

Information Management

The staff takes high interest in the developments of the labour-market. Part time instructors in many cases have their own office and work with a wide range of clients on a daily basis. The university benefits from the fact that this system pushes every instructor to follow recent developments. At the same time this approach of relying on individual labour-market insights does support many fragmented impressions (see chapter 2; **Finding 1**). However, the relations of the teaching staff to the labour-market support the collection of information from this field, though it should be done in a more systematic way integrated into the development of the programmes.

The department keeps track of its graduates on a personal and individual level. The feedback from the representatives of the labour-market on the alumni showed, that a more systematic approach would be highly appreciated and a closer and more formalized involvement of these stakeholders could be a valuable asset in developing the programmes in the future (see chapter 2; **Finding 1**). It is important for the review panel to underline that in light of the different occasions it was recognized that a more structured approach to feedback, evaluation and information management is recommended, though this does not point to a current lack or shortcoming. As the approach of the department so far gives priority to more informal and efficient ways of feedback, the panel believes that a more structured approach would enable the department to identify potential gaps which several individual initiatives cannot deliver.

When it comes to statistics concerning the constitution of the student body and their success rate data is being collected by the university. If and how far analysis of this data happens at departmental level could not be identified nor was there any indication of making this a priority in the review. Consequently, the panel concludes that the relatively small number of students and the

close communication with students on a daily basis is the method of choice of the department at this time and it works sufficiently.

Public Information

The process of how public information is made available is standardized by a university wide understanding on how the information management is to be handled by the department on its website and the individual website for each programme. High quality and accessibility are an important aspect for EMU which seeks to attract students from many different countries who in most cases do not have the opportunity for a site visit or to attend local information events on campus before registration.

Information management is accurately carried out on all levels on which future students and enrolled students might seek information including the programmes in general, the selection procedure, the qualifications awarded as well as the intended learning outcomes. It needs to be highlighted that especially the intended learning outcomes are being discussed, compared and evaluated with great care and attention to detail within the department. This internal work is reflected in the high quality of the descriptions of the intended learning outcomes.

The mission statement of the department can be seen as a more generic part of public information that goes beyond the details of the programmes. While acknowledging that the mission is very much in line with what the department is and seeks, the reviewers encourage the department to consider daring a mission statement that much more reflects the specific character, strengths, and uniqueness of the department when updating its documentation in the next strategic cycle.

Conclusion:

Based on the above assessment, the criterion on information is fulfilled.

9. Recommendation of the expert panel

The panel of experts recommends to accredit the **Bachelor of Interior Architecture (English)** and the **Bachelor of Interior Architecture (Turkish)** offered by the **Eastern Mediterranean University (North Cyprus)**.

Findings:

1. The department should focus on the effective implementation of more structured elements of quality assurance where the link between checking and acting becomes clear to the relevant stakeholders.
2. Student representation in relevant bodies should be broadened and reflect the diversity of the student body, particularly international students.
3. Interdisciplinary elements and teamwork experiences should be extended.
4. Courses such as "Design Theory", "History", and "Sociology" should be placed in the earlier semesters.
5. The studio culture should be further strengthened.
6. Stronger design thinking in material reality should be encouraged instead of conceptual thinking in digital lines.
7. A stronger and more explicit integration of individual subjects such as construction, building science, light and acoustics directly into project-work as an integrated design studio should be considered.
8. The department should incorporate a longer internship period without decreasing the feasibility of studies.
9. In future staff recruitment of the department there should be a focus to balance the ratio of interior architects compared to number of architects in the teaching staff by increasing the number of interior architects.
10. Plotting facilities for students should be available at an economically feasible fee.